

11-73

The Magazine Scene

By Tom Donnelly

"Did there come a point in time when there were 43 different theories of how Watergate happened?" In the November Esquire Edward J. Epstein and John Berendt say, "Yes, to the best of our recollection." The sources for the 43 theories are staggeringly various: John Dean, Martha Mitchell, Spiro Agnew, Rebecca West, Richard M. Nixon, etc. It's the kind of mock-serious tabulation Esquire is prepared to run in any month with an 'r' in it, or, for that matter, in any month without an 'r'.

To pick a few theories more or less at random...

"The John Dean Production Theory" (originally offered by J. Fred Buzhardt Jr., special counsel

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to the President) holds that Watergate was a John Dean operation from start to finish. The "John Mitchell 'Sign Off' Theory" holds that Mitchell approved the Watergate break-in without telling anyone in the White House. "The Dirty Trickster Theory" (as proposed by John Dean) holds that "Charles Colson secretly overrode Mitchell's veto of the Watergate bugging plan and gave Hunt and Liddy the go-ahead."

Esquire says proponents of the "Nixon's the One Theory" are "Martha Mitchell and eight per cent of the American people."

(Eight per cent? No telling at what point in time this survey went to press). The thesis behind this theory is that Nixon approved Watergate and therefore had to cover it up. The major selling point for it is that "it explains everything in one fell swoop—Ockham's Razor," and the drawback, says Esquire, is "Why would the President risk everything by involving himself?"

I don't know what Esquire means by this last, unless it means that Nixon could somehow have approved of the plan without letting anybody know he had approved of it. The meaning of Ockham's Razor is clear enough, especially in the Random House dictionary: "The maxim that assumptions to explain a thing must

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not be multiplied beyond necessity." (More widely known as Occam's Razor, after William of Occam, English scholastic philosopher. Died 1349?)

The proponent of the "Hunt Voice-Altering Theory" is Dr. Charles Lane, molecular biologist, Cambridge, England. Thesis: "E. Howard Hunt used a 'voice-altering device' and various disguises to imitate White House officials while making calls on the White House scrambler phone. He was thus able to command unsuspecting underlings to carry out Watergate and the cover-up."

The "Seven Days in May Theory" holds that the CIA engineered Watergate and exposed the cover-up because, as Stephen Aris of The Sunday Times of London put it, "Many of the more sophisticated CIA men felt the agency was in danger of being emasculated by the President."

"The Disneyland Theory," as proposed by Rebecca West, holds that the "origins of Watergate can be explained by the peculiar nature of Southern California, out of which Nixon and his men emerged." The drawback to this theory is that some of Nixon's men (Mitchell, Magruder, Ehrlichman, Colson, etc.) are not from Southern California.

Leading proponents of the "All-American Theory" (which might also be called the "Watergate was not a crime Theory") are John Wayne, Ronald Reagan, and Robert F. Beaver. "Political espionage is not a crime," according

to Beaver, treasurer of the "elite Lincoln Club in Orange County." Watergate was, in the words of John Wayne "a damned panty raid" carried out by people Ronald Reagan defended as "not criminals at heart."

Then there are the theories holding that Nixon was framed by right-wingers out to destroy the American-Soviet detente; that Watergate was just one visible sign of a gigantic plot by the CIA-military-industrial complex to take over the country and that Watergate is "merely one episode in a titanic subterranean war between two competing elites," the Yankees (the old-line Eastern Establishment) and the Cowboys (the new-moneyed, self-made tycoons in oil, mutual funds and missiles).

That's 11 down and 32 theories to go. The woman Norman Mailer didn't interview, Eunice Murray — nurse, housekeeper, companion and friend to Marilyn Monroe—tells "what really happened during Marilyn's last hours" to Ladies' Home Journal reporter George Carpozi Jr.

Marilyn was in a generally cheerful frame of mind on that final day (Saturday, August 4, 1962) Mrs. Murray says. She was happy about the way her new house was shaping up and she was "in a very gay mood" during a phone conversation with Joe DiMaggio Jr. "He had broken off with a girlfriend of whom Marilyn did not approve. She was very pleased about that." Mrs. Murray didn't hear what Marilyn was saying, but she did hear her laughing.

Dr. Ralph M. Greenson, Marilyn's psychiatrist came to the house at about 4:30 p.m. in response to a call Mrs. Murray had made earlier that day. Mrs. Murray still doesn't know why she called him, actually. "Marilyn had said something to me about oxygen. I didn't understand, but I didn't ask her what she meant. It didn't seem urgent, but it stuck in my mind." The doctor said he didn't think the reference to oxygen had any special meaning. He may have spoken to Marilyn about it during his visit with her but apparently Mrs. Murray didn't hear another word about oxygen from either of them.

Dr. Greenson asked the housekeeper if she would spend the night. She said she would, though "there wasn't any feeling of urgency in his request," and "no clues" that she should be "especially watchful."

The nightly retirement of Marilyn Monroe had developed into an elaborate ritual involving, among other things, "putting the phones to bed." There were two phones in the guest bedroom: One was Marilyn's "personal phone," the other was provided and paid for by her studio. Both had long extension cords so that Marilyn could take them into her own bedroom when she wanted them there. Every night before she went to bed Marilyn would take the phones into the guest room and "put pillows over them so she couldn't possibly be disturbed by their ringing." Then she would go back to her room, draw the draperies, and

"take some kind of sedative." When she had adjusted her eye shade and sleep."

The last words Mrs. Murray heard from Marilyn were, "We won't go for that ride after all." Mrs. Murray "didn't know what Marilyn meant" (again!) but learned later that Dr. Greenson had recommended a drive if Marilyn felt restless. (Mrs. Murray was also her chauffeur.)

Mrs. Murray says she went to bed herself, read for a bit, fell asleep, woke at midnight ("I don't know why"), felt like wandering around, walked out into the hallway and saw the telephone cord still under Marilyn's door. "I knew immediately that something was terribly wrong because she hadn't put the telephone to bed." Mrs. Murray called Dr. Greenson. He asked, "Well did you try the door, did you call to her?" Mrs. Murray said no but proceeded to do both those things. The door was locked and she got no answer.

Presently Dr. Greenson arrived on the scene and got into the bedroom by breaking a pane of glass in a casement window. Marilyn was lying on her bed, nude, face down, the phone under her. "We've lost her," Dr. Greenson said, "Rigor mortis has set in."

Marilyn's death just must have been an accident, Mrs. Murray says. Marilyn was in a weakened condition (she hadn't eaten a thing all day) and "she may have taken a few pills, then lost all sense of reality and taken the rest."

Any truth to the reports that Robert Kennedy had been seeing Marilyn? "Well of course he had," says Mrs. Murray. Did Mrs. Murray see him at Marilyn's house on that fatal day? "Definitely not."

In a Redbook piece titled "How My Ideas About Women Have Changed," Dr. Spock tells of the efforts he has been making to atone for the "sexism" he didn't realize he was guilty of, until the Women's Libbers charged him with it about three years ago.

Since then he has done over the offending chapters in "Decent and Indecent," and at the moment he is busy revising "Baby and Child Care" to "get the discrimination out of it."

"Like everyone else writing in the child-care field," says Dr. Spock, "I have always referred to the baby and child with the pronouns 'he' and 'him.' There is a grammatical excuse, since these pronouns can be used correctly to refer to a girl or woman as well as to a boy or man, just as the word 'man' may cover woman too in certain contexts. But I now agree with the liberators of women that this is not enough of an excuse."

But what can the doctor use "instead of the bisexual 'he'?" He's been experimenting but he finds all the alternatives awkward. "We have no singular pronoun in English that covers both sexes as 'they' does in the plural," says Dr. Spock. "'He or she' sounds all right once in a paragraph, but it is hopelessly clumsy when repeated in se-

veral sentences in succession. I've thought of using an illegitimate hybrid, 's/he'. Though it would irritate many people, it has a neatness to it. But there is no similar way to condense 'her/him' or 'her/his,' and these double pronouns are obtrusive when not condensed."

Dr. Spock says he's worked out a couple of solutions to his awesome dilemma. "I will use 'they' and 'them' whenever the thought can be put in the plural. When the plural is not possible I'll use 'she' and 'her' in the general sense to cover both girl and boy just as 'he' and 'him' have been used in the past."

That Dr. Spock! She sure is a caution. No wonder her name is synonymous with child care!

The November magazines are filled with Kennedyana. Memories of J.F.K. by his widow, his children and his only surviving brother (in McCall's). Esquire has "Trying to Remember J.F.K. —What Nixon, Goldwater, Cronkite and others recall about Nov. 23, 1963." In Redbook it's "What Women Really Meant to J.F.K." In the Ladies' Home Journal there's "Caroline Kennedy Turns Sixteen" and "Ten Years of Camelot" by Jim Bishop and "Famous Americans Recall the Day J.F.K. Was Shot."

If these anniversary remembrances seem redundant, that's because they are redundant. The magazines have been belaboring Camelot, month in and month out, for a decade.